



VALENCIA COLLEGE

Winter Park Campus

2016-2017

Divisional Strategic Planning Brief – Winter Park Campus [1st Brief]

5/31/2017

Campus Outcome

To promote literature, reading, and writing for students and members of the Valencia and Central Florida community in an accessible forum open to all, providing access to world-class writers and teachers of writing and involving the Winter Park community to share their own words and ideas.

Department Outcome

To increase student, faculty, staff, and Central Florida community access to literature and writing opportunities.

BACKGROUND

In early 2015, the Winter Park campus creative writing faculty began to discuss the idea of hosting a writer's festival which would highlight some of its current faculty's writing as well as bringing in a national author who could also speak. The faculty members were hoping to offer their English and creative writing students an experience of learning from a "master writer" as well as shed light on a relevant topic through a writer's lens. The second annual Writers Festival was held Thursday, September 29 through Friday, September 30, 2016, on the Winter Park Campus and featured renowned poet [Richard Blanco](#), who is best known for his poetry oration at President Obama's second inauguration. The festival's theme focused on healing through poetry in light of the recent tragedy at the [Pulse](#) nightclub.

INTERVENTION

1. Develop student and community writing workshops and panels, focusing on literary craft and writing techniques.
2. Host readings by noted visiting authors open and promoted to the outside community.
3. Create curriculum materials that coincide with the visiting authors.
4. Improve visibility and access by increasing advertising and promotion to the community and students through social and news media.

STRATEGIC RESULTS

1. Hosted two writing workshops for students, staff, faculty, and community members in Fall 2016. About 40 attendees were present at each workshop. Richard Blanco led students, faculty, staff and members of the Central Florida community in two poetry activities. Participants analyzed his work, "Looking for the Gulf Motel," and considered how the use of senses incorporated in poetry can aid in bringing the audience to the intended message. Richard noted that this poem emphasizes a theme that has inspired much of his work. He then invited the audience to analyze his experience of returning to a childhood memory to find that it was not as he remembered. He also encouraged participants to think of a time when they had revisited a memory, only to discover it had changed. (Over 40 students participated).
2. An open mic poetry reading took place, where several participants shared poems close to their hearts — some reflecting on loss and tragedy, love and even a bit of humor.

3. The culminating event was a reading by Richard Blanco. As Richard shared his personal poems through the narrative of his life, he kept proposing the question, “What is home?” Being a gay Cuban-American, he expressed a connection with the victims of the Pulse tragedy. In his poem “One Pulse-One Poem,” Richard painted a picture of the Latino culture that was vibrant and full of life, which then became silenced on that night. Memorializing the victims and calling the audience to action in the final line of the poem: “Let’s place each memory like a star, the light of their past reaching us now, and always, reminding us to keep writing again until we never need to write a poem like this again.”
 - a. The Writers Festival ended as Richard shared a poem written by the late [Ilyse Kusnetz](#), who was the featured poet of the first Writers Festival. And just like with her poems — or a star in the sky — her memory lives on in each of us.
 - b. Attendance was over-capacity (over 100 students, faculty, and guests) at the reading. In addition, book materials were available at all events for any attendees.
4. A brand was developed for the festival and advertising was done through print media as well as social media including blogs, Facebook, and Twitter.

NEXT STEPS

We want to name the festival after one of the festival founders, Ilyse Kusnetz. We would like to add more writing workshops that address different styles of writing. For the culminating event, due to capacity issues, we are considering a larger venue, such as East Campus, until the new Winter Park Public Library is completed.